

## Chapel to Seek Law Requiring Mechanical Inspection of Autos

By CHARLES E. CHAPEL, Assemblyman, 46th District

At my request, the Legislative Counsel is preparing a bill providing for mandatory annual inspection of all vehicles subject to registration over four years old or upon all transfers of ownership, other than previously unregistered vehicles, and providing procedure to accomplish this purpose.

In the past three years, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Rhode Island have adopted periodic motor vehicle inspection laws. More than one-third of the states (18) now include motor inspections as part of their traffic control and accident prevention programs. These states account for more than one-third of the nation's motor vehicle population. The other states leave to chance the maintenance of vehicles in proper condition.

THERE ARE five important reasons why unsafe vehicle condition has never been given proper recognition as a cause of accidents:

- (1) Vehicles are often damaged beyond the point of determining condition at the time of the accident.
- (2) Accident investigations tend to concentrate on the driver and driving condition.
- (3) Many investigators are not trained to recognize evidence of unsafe vehicle condition.
- (4) Accident reporting procedures in different states are not uniform.
- (5) Drivers are reluctant to admit maintenance neglect, fearing prosecution for contributory negligence.

IN SPITE of these handicaps, it is reasonable to assume that vehicle condition does play an important part in traffic accident experiences. The national average death rate (deaths per 100 million vehicle miles of travel) in 1959 was 5.4.

The average rate for states with mandatory inspection laws was 4.7, about 15 per cent below the national average. States without vehicle inspection programs average 6.1, or 13 per cent above the national average.

TO ACHIEVE minimum requirements for maintenance of a vehicle in good mechanical condition, that is, safe for operation on public streets and highways, at least the following parts should be inspected:

- (1) Brakes, (2) Lights, (3) Steering and wheel alignment, (4) Tires and wheels, (5) Exhaust system, (6) Windshield and other glass, (7) Windshield wipers, and (8) Horn. On commercial vehicles several other parts also need careful periodic inspection.

A brief but well written pamphlet titled "Why Motor Vehicle Inspection" can be obtained free by writing to William Randolph Hearst, Jr., Chairman, The President's Committee for Traffic Safety, 532 Pennsylvania Building, Washington 4, D.C.

EFFECTIVE periodic inspection programs raise the condition standards of all vehicles operating on streets and highways. About 55 per cent of all vehicles examined every year in Pennsylvania are found to need service attention. New Jersey rejects about 35 per cent annually. Rejections in the District of Columbia average about 50 per cent.

Mandatory motor vehicle inspection prevents accidents. Texas reports that 15 per cent of its accidents were due to unsafe vehicle condition before inspection started. After inspection became mandatory, the figure dropped to five per cent. The first year that New Jersey had mandatory inspection there was a drop of 32 per cent in traffic deaths.

IN AREAS where vehicles are periodically inspected under state supervision, insurance rates drop for both bodily injury and property damage. Furthermore, states requiring periodic inspection do not become dumping grounds for mechanically unfit vehicles, as happens frequently in states which do not have laws of this type.

Obviously, vehicles which are regularly and properly maintained bring higher prices when traded or sold.

For many years, people have suggested that California adopt compulsory motor vehicle inspection. As part of the growing program for traffic safety to save lives, I believe that the bill I am introducing will be enacted, either at this session or the next, but you, the public, must express your views on this subject to members of the Legislature.

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